

PUBLIC SUBMISSION

As of: October 28, 2010

Received: October 26, 2010

Status: Posted

Posted: October 27, 2010

Tracking No. 80b77791

Comments Due: November 08, 2010

Submission Type: Web

Docket: EPA-R03-OW-2010-0736

Draft Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load

Comment On: EPA-R03-OW-2010-0736-0001

Clean Water Act Section 303(d): Notice for the Public Review of the Draft Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Chesapeake Bay

Document: EPA-R03-OW-2010-0736-0086

Comment submitted by C. Strait

Submitter Information

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General Comment

I strongly disagree with the backstop limits of 3 mg/l total Nitrogen and 0.1 mg/l total Phosphorus that are being proposed for point source wastewater treatment facilities. When I first learned of these potential requirements, I questioned the ability of laboratories to accurately and precisely analyze samples to these stringent parameters. In October 2009, I collected three grab samples from the effluent of the wastewater plant that I manage. Each of these samples were split and sent to three different PADEP certified laboratories to be analyzed for dissolved Phosphorus and ortho Phosphorus. Results from the three labs were consistent for only one of the analytical tests performed. Results from the remaining five analytical tests performed varied by as much as 1.3 mg/l between the different labs. This clearly illustrates that the analytical methods used to test Phosphorus, of any species, has a margin of error that is much greater than the proposed 0.1 mg/l requirement. These samples were collected and analyzed according to the procedures outlined in Standard Methods.

I strongly feel that on-lot septic systems (non-point source discharges) contribute more nutrients to the Bay than what is being allowed for in the calculations. The local townships do not have good data as to how many on-lot septic systems are actually present within their jurisdiction, or if they are functional or failing. Local townships have only recently started to implement the three-year pump and haul program that is required by their Act 537 Plans, some of which were approved more than ten years ago. I do not understand why it has taken this long for enforcement to begin. I feel there needs to be more regulatory action against those who fail to follow through with the contents of their Act 537 Plan in a timely manner. There needs to be more accountability from the elected township officials who fail to realize the importance of their job. Because of this type of negligence, point source discharges are being unfairly targeted with lower parameters.

I am very disheartened to see properties that are continually contributing to pollution of the Bay. One particular property I pass every week is a small half-acre lot containing a mobile home dwelling, a fenced area for cattle and/or horses, and a stream that is classified as a high quality cold water fishery. This has a multitude of transgressions against trying to clean up the Bay; the animal lot has never had any grass, trash is thrown in large piles between the trailer and the stream, and I question whether they even have an on-lot septic system. Regardless, this is a prime example of both nutrient and sediment pollution. When something like this is so blatantly obvious, why can't something be done to correct the problem? Why is this allowed to continue at a time when major wastewater treatment facility upgrades are being required to meet stricter discharge requirements, increasing the rate customers are forced to pay? This is unfair to those who try to do the right thing and be good stewards to the environment.